1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

342 the heavy roof. The first, or auxiliary, pair of ridge poles is put in position after the last log has been laid along the length of the building and another along the width. This width log, as well as all subsequent ones added above it, is cut more narrowly than the underlying logs. Two ridge poles, as well as the center ridge log, project about two feet in front of the building and thus provide support for the foreward eaves. The width logs, on which the first pair of ridge poles is laid, project about three or four feet on the outside of the building. On these projections are placed two lengthwise running logs used as braces to support the roof poles and the packed dirt, which is generally used for roofing. In the older type of log cabin this point of construction is somewhat complex and is illustrated in Figure 4, B.

When the central ridge pole is in position, the roofing is begun. Where lumber is not available, poles, five or six inches in diameter, are hewed on what will constitute the interior face and set close together on the ridge poles. The bottom ends of these roof poles rest on the brace logs previously described and illustrated. Sometimes split poles are used in roofing. Harry Lang's cabin contains forty-five logs, or a total of ninety split poles. The old type cabin illustrated, contains sixty-eight spruce poles, 6′5″ long, lightly hewed on their inner face. A square hole is left to accommodate the stovepipe, and the roof is then covered with moss. Dirt, to a depth of about six inches, is then piled on the moss and packed firm. Instead of a pole and dirt roof, a piece of eight ounce canvas is sometimes used for roofing. If a mill sawed lumber is used for the roof, it is covered with a double layer of roofing paper. Older cabins may be floored with split and hewed poles. Today floors of mill sawed lumber are the rule. Line cabins are usually floorless, the ground being covered with spruce brush.

Cabins are chinked after construction is completed. Chinking consists of moss or mud applied from the outside of the building while on the interior the spaces between the poles are stuffed with moss, old clothing, or sawdust. On both the interior and exterior walls, wide gaps between the logs are sometimes chinked with thin spruce saplings nailed in place. To add further protection from wind and drafts, wrapping paper and cardboard are nailed against the inside walls. Windows are all purchased readymade in Lower Post and transported to the settlements. A home cabin can be completed in about ten days, if two or three men are available for the work. A smaller line cabin can be built in two or three days by two [462] men. Housebuilding is always done by men.

Sentiment generally favors a house to an open camp. On the other hand, some older people are reluctant to move into a house before the weather turns really cold. Mrs. Man wanted to remain in a tent as long as possible and not hole herself up "like a bear."

Only rarely are cabins dismantled and moved to a new site. Occasionally cabins, which have not been kept in good repair, are wrecked after a new cabin has been constructed.

● [527] The completion of a new house is sometimes marked by a drinking party. In Lower Post, River Joe celebrated the completion of his house with a dance. Men who built cabins expressed strong pride in their achievements. Nick Lang, who was building a large house in Lower Post told the writer: "First time pretty hard; next time, by God, easy!"

352 *Furnishings.* A limited amount of furniture is found in cabins and houses; less in tent frames. A tent contains no furniture other than a stove in winter.

Home cabins and tent frames may contain a table, simple benches, and sometimes a

1: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945) 1949 ND12 Nahane ND12

cent animals' flesh. Some fathers warn their sons not to eat moose marrow, the explanation being that marrow will destroy the boy's endurance and thus limit his moose hunting ability. A number of families avoid feeding their dogs the meat of trapped animals explaining: "If you do, never catch anything next time." Considerable respect is shown to the bear. Coming across a bear, River Joe once refused to kill the animal, vaguely explaining his behavior by saying that the meat was not good to eat. On another occasion the ethnographer's four year old son several times threw a bear paw into a brush fire. Each time Donald Suza pulled it out and finally threw the part into the river. He would not reveal his objection to burning the paw. In discussing the incident Old Man explained that the Frances Lake Indians continue to regard "many things" as "bad business" and added that Lady Suza will not eat bear meat. 784

The only religious rites and ceremonies in which the Kaska participate are those officiated by Catholic missionaries. Such ceremonies include baptism, prayer, Mass, confession, and communion. During the summer, nightly devotions in Lower Post bring many people together to recite one or two decades of the rosary. The prayers are said in English, although a few people also know them in Kaska. Apart from such occasions, prayer is limited. River Joe said that during his wife's illness he had prayed for her improvement. The woman died and Joe is reported to have expressed resentment that his prayers were not answered. During the summer, Mass is celebrated every morning but in winter it is limited to Sundays. How well the symbolism and liturgy of the rite are understood could not be learned. When attending church services the sexes generally separate, men sitting on the left side of the building and women on the right. 796 797 [782] [782]

Many people go to confession about once a year to confess such sins as drinking, swearing, and sexual offenses. The confession, according to Old Man, is prompted by the priest asking questions like: "Did you swear?" and then requesting the number of times that the offense was committed. Following confession the people may receive communion. 783

Christmas is the most important ceremonial holiday. In the winter settlements its celebration is sometimes begun on Christmas eve, when a brew is drunk; drinking may continue for several days. If the people are in the trading post, Mass is attended Christmas morning and, sometimes, an afternoon church party is given for children. In the summer of 1945, a religious ceremony occurred in connection with the consecration of the new church in Lower Post. The rite was performed by the bishop of the diocese and was witnessed by all the Indians then in the community. On the following morning a solemn high Mass was celebrated by the bishop assisted by two missionaries. Both ceremonies were marked by considerable glamor and quite appreciated by the Indians. 527 177 796

Attitudes of the people toward the priests vary, but in general are marked by respect and some tendency to ingratiation. In the case of many people one of the reasons for attending religious rites is a desire not to expose themselves to the direct attention of the missionaries. The priests, who are young men, try to be friendly and democratic and appear to be sincerely interested in the Indians' temporal and spiritual welfare. Any direct interference of the missionaries in the life of the people is resented and may lead to an informal boycott of the church and school. Old Man stated that once when a missionary reported him to the police for drunkenness, he remained away from church until the priest suitably 797

6: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12
Upper Liard

that sometimes dugouts engaged in such contests.[33] People played many games including blind man's bluff, which involved covering the eyes of a player with tanned skin while five or six other participants circled the blindfolded person, who sought to capture them. Both sexes of all ages played hide and seek. Sometimes an object was hidden and its discovery became the object of the game. With a raw skin available children initiated the game of drag-skin, jumping on the skin and trying to hold it back by their weight as it was being drawn by an older person. String figures called for a certain amount of skill to construct designs like a duck, crow, feet, and conical lodge from a length of tanned-skin line. Rope jumping and rope tug-of-war did not come into popularity until contact, and pole tug-of-war, skin-tossing, as well as snapping sticks, could not be recalled as amusement devices. Shamans may have used snapping sticks as part of the curing ritual. Story telling possessed educative value and constituted the pleasant responsibility of old men. A story teller might insist that the audience look him directly in the eyes. Should a young person shift his glance he would be reprimanded by the narrator remarking, "You won't be smart."[34] Private ownership did not extend to folk tales.

Gambling occurred in summer, when a number of family bands gathered together and the weather allowed players to assemble around an outdoor fire. The stick game, of which several alternative forms existed, furnished the most popular medium for betting.[35] Since the pattern of this game has already been described for the Kaska[36] the details will not be repeated here. Mainly the game took place at night, illumination coming from a well-tended fire located between the double line of kneeling players. A steady drumming furnished rhythm to which the gamblers moved hands and body as they challenged the opponents to guess in which hand the wooden token lay concealed. Women as well as men played the stick game but the sexes never competed in the same game. Forfeits consisted of whatever valuables a man chose to offer. Sometimes after playing most of the night a man lost all his resources. With the gambling fever still possessing him he might in the end bet his wife. Should he lose his bet the woman remained with the winner for two or three days before returning to her husband. Marriages rarely broke up as a result of this custom. Sometimes an old man, fearing that the woman would become accustomed to the other man, went to the winner's camp and urged the latter to send her back.

Feasts marked a number of points on the life cycle. Thus parents celebrated the birth

[33] The Tlingit organized three- to four-mile races, run by from three to five canoes. Jones, *Study of the Thlingets of Alaska* (1914), 81.

[34] A Takhtan informant, Beal Carlick, said that among his people a grandfather told many stories about fighting, murder, and warfare. Such deeds were explained as resulting from the evil nature of some men and the craziness of some women. "This was just like school, educate us so we don't lie, don't steal." Stories also possessed entertainment value and filled evenings when there was nothing else to do. "Sit down, listen, don't run around anymore," the informant said.

[35] Stick games were also a favorite form of gambling among the Tlingit. Swanton, *Social Condition, Beliefs and Linguistic Relationship of the Tlingit Indians* (1908), 443–444; Jones, *Study of the Thlingets of Alaska* (1914), 122–123.

[36] Honigmann, *Culture and Ethos of Kaska Society* (1949), 174–175.

6: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12
Upper Liard

of a child (first born?) with a meal to which friends were invited. The first game killed by a youth also became the occasion for a "party." A wealthy man honored his daughter in the same way when she attained menarche or married. Marriage feasts often constituted potlatches, at which the bride's mother aided by her brothers and sisters presented gifts of manufactured objects to the members of the opposite matrilineal moiety. While no elaborate death feast took place a memorial potlatch followed about a year after the death.[20] In winter people enjoyed the Biggest Cache Feast, presented by a man who owned a particularly rich meat cache. Huge quantities of cooked ground hog and gopher and birch-bark dishes filled with grease were served to the guests. Perhaps serving as a hint for someone to provide lavish entertainment, members of the Crow moiety occasionally arranged a mock feast. When the invited guests assembled they found very little food available, "just a bite for everybody." Amused, the guests exclaimed, "A Wolverine Party!" One moiety or the other would then usually announce a more satisfying repast.

The origin of the potlatch is explained in the following tale.

A girl was pregnant. When she was ready to have her baby she went into seclusion behind the dwelling. How one day as the sun was setting her father heard her talking and laughing. The people did not know that she had given birth to a monster. The girl returned to her parents but the monster grew large and ate many people. He was almost a hundred feet long and had a great, white stomach. Everybody wanted to kill the thing but nobody was able to do so. One day the people sent the girl away. That is when they killed the monster. When the mother returned she cried like hell because this had been her child. The girl cried so much that the old man became frightened. So the old man made a big potlatch and gave away many things. Pretty soon the girl felt better. Since then the Indians had a potlatch everytime somebody died.

To prepare a potlatch a host first had to secure sufficient quantity of manufactured goods and food that could be distributed. While some of the objects came from members of the donor's matrilineal moiety and need not be repaid, the responsibility for some of the contributions rested with the potlatcher and his family. The distribution of many fine things and large amounts of food won prestige for a man. From such behavior he won the reputation of being a "big man." But only a very capable hunter could acquire enough meat and skins to provide an elaborate affair. Previous to the party the assembled wealth lay displayed in the dwelling on a mat of rawhide or a bear skin. The potlatcher then proceeded to invite his guests, all members of the opposite moiety. A small ceremony was attached to the invitation. The host, visiting a guest's home, planted his walking stick inside the entry and uttered the syllable, "nin!"[21] The visitors assembled in the potlatch house where brothers and sisters of the potlatcher served them food. After they had finished eating the host distributed gifts through his assistants. There occurred much joking at this stage of the proceedings. For example, a server, following the typical Athapaskan pattern of humor, would pretend to throw a visitor's present

[20] See below, p. 139, for details of a "small" death feast.

[21] Messenger sticks have been described for the Nunivak Eskimo. Here they were used by the message carrier who invited people to a social climbing feast. (Lantis, *Social Culture of the Nunivak Eskimo* [1946], 188.) The distribution of similar badges among the Eskimo of Alaska is discussed in the same writer's *Alaskan Eskimo Ceremonialism* [1947], 69-72.) The trait is not mentioned in Drucker's check list of the Pacific Coast. Drucker, *Culture Element Distributions: XXVI, Northwest Coast* (1950).

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555 431 coal. Other masks came from the head skins of black and grizzly bears, the goat, and sheep.

431 536 Potlatches were accompanied by games and sports, some of which included competitions between teams recruited from opposite moieties. Popular sports including racing, tugs-of-war, blind-man's bluff, wrestling, target shooting, throwing, and gambling. Races took place between men, the end of a course sometimes being marked by the prize that would become the property of the winner. Thus an arrow thrust into a tree would be pulled out by the first contestant to reach the objective. Two spruce bark traveling canoes also raced, each consisting a team selected on moiety lines. The winning team claimed the rival vessel as their prize. Three or four men engaged in swimming races, often to see who could cross a river quickest. Tugs-of-war also occurred between moieties. Customarily some boiled meat piled on one side of the playing ground constituted the prize of the winning side. The Kaska, one concludes, did not enjoy sport for its own sake but preferred to compete for some tangible reward. Men and women engaged in tugs-of-war, the sport being played with lines as well as with poles. Poles in turn were both pushed and pulled. Blind-man's-bluff found favor with children and adults. In this game one of the contestants had his eyes bound with caribou hide. Moving with outstretched arms toward the sound cues of the other participants, he sought to grasp somebody's coat or arm. In a variety of this game a blindfolded individual [illegible] to a stump. Successful retrieval won the right to keep the prize. Wrestling matches endured for several hours, for as one contestant was overcome another stepped from the circle of onlookers to challenge the victor. Each defeated challenger paid the victor in moccasins, a bow, or an arrow. Wrestling for women was denied [171] by the informant, in typical fashion, remarked having heard of the practice among the Esquimaux and "Mackenzie River Indians." Shooting with bow and arrows for a mark on a tree or toward some other target rarely involved a prize. Sticks were also flung across snow (snow sealing?) to see how far one could hit. Skin tossing and dog-skin 555 633 games could not be recalled. People keenly relished gambling in the form of the stick game. Teams consisted of from five to ten men each. Instead of playing with the hands under a robe the contestants held their arms behind the back while they shuffled the painted wooden sticks. Two drummers accompanied the players and simultaneously chanted "hi, hi, hi, hi." Should drums be unavailable the players themselves chanted in a moderately low, double rhythm, six-eighths time: "he-he, he-hi, hi-he, he-hi."

557 431 Through feasts the Indians celebrated a youth's first successful hunt for large game, a girl's return from her initial menstrual seclusion, and a youth's completion of his dream quest. Sometimes the feasts became potlatches. No mortuary feast took place but a "remembrance" potlatch occurred about one year after death. Potlatches were exchanged between moieties and followed a period of gift solicitation. Objects given to a potlatcher constituted outright gifts for the festival from which, in turn, all the givers derived prestige. The contributors received gifts when the opposite moiety repaid the potlatch. Only rich men provided a potlatch, their power follows being unable to accumulate sufficient food or objects for such an undertaking. Clowning and masked dancing enlivened the give-away but nobody recalled the use of ceremonial whips.